

CLAIM LISTING

1. (currently amended) A method of feed forward mail load notification to a carrier in a mass mailing operation, comprising the steps of:

monitoring an actual mail production characteristic;

transmitting a mail load forecast to the carrier, the mail load forecast corresponding to a predicted number of mail pieces determined at least in part by the actual mail production characteristic; and

notifying the carrier of a change in said mail load forecast if said monitoring step indicates a variance in the mail production characteristic that can affect the accuracy of ~~with respect to the~~ transmitted mail load forecast.

2. (original) The method of Claim 1 further comprising the steps of:

receiving feedback from the carrier related to the carrier's capacity to accept mail and

adjusting mail production in response to said feedback.

3. (original) The method of Claim 1 further comprising the steps of:

receiving feedback from the carrier related to the carrier's capacity to accept mail and

requesting the services of a second carrier to accept excess production in the event the carrier is unable to accept the entire mail load production.

4. (original) The method of Claim 1 wherein said monitoring step comprises monitoring a mail production schedule.

5. (original) The method of Claim 1 wherein said monitoring step comprises monitoring production history.

6. (original) The method of Claim 1 wherein said monitoring step comprises monitoring present mail inventory.

7. (original) The method of Claim 1 wherein said monitoring step comprises monitoring an equipment maintenance schedule.

8. (original) The method of Claim 1 wherein said monitoring step comprises monitoring a present mail production rate.

9. (original) The method of Claim 1 wherein said mail load forecast is resolved to daily production forecasts.

10. (original) The method of Claim 1 wherein said mail load forecast is a rolling forecast that is updated periodically.

11. (original) The method of Claim 1 wherein said mail load forecast indicates the total number of mail pieces.

12. (original) The method of Claim 1 wherein said mail load forecast indicates the total weight of mail pieces.

13. (original) The method of Claim 1 wherein said mail load forecast indicates the destination of mail pieces.

14. (original) The method of Claim 1 wherein said mail load forecast indicates the routing of mail pieces.

15. (original) The method of Claim 1 wherein said mail load forecast is communicated to the carrier via the Internet.

16. (original) The method of Claim 1 wherein said mail load forecast is communicated to the carrier via a private network.

17. (original) The method of Claim 1 wherein said mail load forecast is communicated to the carrier telephonically.

18. (currently amended) An apparatus for feeding forward mail load notification to a carrier in a mass mailing operation, comprising:

means for monitoring an actual mail production characteristic;

means for transmitting a mail load forecast to the carrier, the mail load forecast corresponding to a predicted number of mail pieces determined at least in part by the mail production characteristic; and

means for notifying the carrier of a change in said mail load forecast if said means for monitoring indicates a variance in the mail production characteristic that can affect the accuracy of ~~with respect to~~ the mail load forecast.

19. (original) The apparatus of Claim 18 further comprising:

means for receiving feedback from the carrier related to the carrier's capacity to accept mail and

means for adjusting mail production in response to said feedback.

20. (original) The apparatus of Claim 18 further comprising:

means for receiving feedback from the carrier related to the carrier's capacity to accept mail and

means for requesting the services of a second carrier to accept excess production in the event the carrier is unable to accept the entire mail load production.

21. (original) The apparatus of Claim 18 wherein said means for monitoring monitors a mail production schedule.

22. (original) The apparatus of Claim 18 wherein said means for monitoring monitors production history.

23. (original) The apparatus of Claim 18 wherein said means for monitoring monitors present mail inventory.

24. (original) The apparatus of Claim 18 wherein said means for monitoring monitors an equipment maintenance schedule.

25. (original) The apparatus of Claim 18 wherein said means for monitoring monitors a present mail production rate.

26. (original) The apparatus of Claim 18 wherein said mail load forecast is resolved to daily production forecasts.

27. (original) The apparatus of Claim 18 wherein said mail load forecast is a rolling forecast that is updated periodically.

28. (original) The apparatus of Claim 18 wherein said mail load forecast indicates the total number of mail pieces.

29. (original) The apparatus of Claim 18 wherein said mail load forecast indicates the total weight of mail pieces.

30. (original) The apparatus of Claim 18 wherein said mail load forecast indicates the destination of mail pieces.

31. (original) The apparatus of Claim 18 wherein said mail load forecast indicates the routing of mail pieces.

32. (original) The apparatus of Claim 18 wherein said mail load forecast is communicated to the carrier via the Internet.

33. (original) The apparatus of Claim 18 wherein said mail load forecast is communicated to the carrier via a private network.

34. (original) The apparatus of Claim 18 wherein said mail load forecast is communicated to the carrier telephonically.